

Good evening, Lemon Grove.

What a special gathering this is of our local leaders, dignitaries, neighbors and friends.

It is my great honor to present my first State of the City address.

Thank you for your support, interest and investment in your community.

Lemon Grove is a little city with a big heart; recognized for having the best climate on earth. We have made progress over the course of the year. I am pleased to provide you with this update, as we look at a few of the accomplishments from the last year.

Over the past year we, your elected leaders, have worked towards achieving the City Council's Priorities for Lemon Grove. These priorities include – enhancing our built environment with more street repair, beautifying the City and repairing broken sidewalks; enriching community life with more community events, more recreational opportunities, supporting public art and planning for additional park space; amplifying public safety services by working to improve park safety and working regionally to help homeless individuals; create a friendly business and economic environment to encourage new businesses and activate the downtown core.

Infrastructure

This past year Lemon Grove repaired 4.8 miles of streets, filled 2,451 potholes and used 201 tons of asphalt to cover larger potholes and do some overlay projects. This increase in street repair and maintenance was made possible by SB1, the additional gas tax the state passed over a year ago. When SB1 is fully implemented, Lemon Grove will see our street repair and maintenance budget increase over one million dollars.

Public works crew try and keep Lemon Grove clean, last year our crews removed 1174 graffiti sites and cleaned up 238 illegal dumpings sites.

Median improvements along Broadway and Lemon Grove Ave is the start to improving our appearance in Lemon Gove.

We have updated of Sewer System Master Plan to ensure we stay on top of maintenance, upgrades and repairs. This plan gives the Sanitation District a blue print to keep everything flowing smoothly.

Community Life

Through the generous donations of our sponsors, we continue to provide great community events in Lemon Grove – along with concerts in the park, movies in the park, Eggstravaganza, this year we expanded the Annual Bonfire event to bring more community partners to help celebrate the start of the holiday season.

Quarterly clean up events were created to help bring everyone together to give some T.L.C. to Lemon Grove. Last year over 300 volunteers helped remove over 2,500 pounds of trash were from our city.

With our Library partners we painted a community mural and created chalk art on School House Lane.

We just finished a yearlong celebration of our 40th Anniversary with history minutes from business, community and elected leaders. (If you have not seen them – check them out on Lemon Grove’s You Tube channel.)

During our Anniversary year we created the (hashtag) Kindness Kounts campaign. This campaign will continue because Kindness does Kount.

This year we are partnering with Monte Vista Village to hold a Pet Expo.

Through a grant, we were able to provide summer meals to our residents under 18. Last year we served 6,720 meals to Lemon Grove youth.

Two community Murals were painted throughout town to show community pride. This pride was contagious, some of the downtown businesses commissioned their own public art. If you have not seen them, please take a moment and drive by - they are beautiful.

A small group of residents came together to bring a corner lot a live with a Community Garden. By allowing this group of volunteers to lease the City’s land (for free) resident will get an opportunity to showcase there green thumbs by growing fruits and vegetables and fruits to share and eat.

I am happy to announce a new partnership with the County of San Diego to bring SD Nights to Lemon Grove. Safe Destination Nights or SD Nights is a program designed to provide the Lemon Grove youth a safe place for recreation and enrichment during critical hours.

City staff is working on finalizing the details of the partnership with the County. The County will provide staff supervision at the Lemon Grove Recreation Center every Saturday evening from approximately 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. We hope to announce a start date very soon.

This partnership is the first step to implement a new youth oriented program at the Recreation Center and we look forward to reaching out to our local partners to increase and enhance youth programming at the Recreation Center in the future.

Public Safety

The public’s safety is a top priority for the City Council. We are appreciate the thankless and tireless work our Lemon Grove Fire Fighters and Lemon Grove Sheriff’s Deputies do each and every day to keep our City secure, safe and strong.

Last year Fire fighter’s responded to 5033 calls for service – all from our 1 station.

Lemon Grove Sheriff’s Deputies in 2017 responded to 11,330 calls for service and in the first 6 months of 2018, they have responded to 6483 calls for service; this is in addition to the deputy initiated activity.

In 2017 deputies initiated 2808 activities and in 2018 they have almost doubled their activities to 4303.

Let me put this in perspective - in 2017 our deputies handle 87 calls per deputy per month; this trend is continuing in 2018. In the first 6 months deputies handled 86 calls per deputy per month.

The traffic division issued 251 traffic citations in the first 6 months of 2018.

The good news is, the overall, crime rate is trending down in 2018 by 15% over 2017.

Through a Department of Justice Grant the Lemon Grove Station began a bicycle patrol team. We are reapplying for this grant to continue this special team in 2019.

The City Council passed a new law to make all Lemon Grove Parks alcohol free and smoke free. Thanks to a grant from the Heal Zone, our new park signs ensure all park visitors are informed of these new rules. Our part-time park ranger also helps to educate park visitors on the rules to keep our Parks family friendly.

Regionally, city staff is working with other east county cities on assisting those individuals experiencing homelessness. This complex issue is multi-faceted and coming together as a region is the key to helping individuals to a more dignified way of life.

Business and Economic Development

This year we saw several new businesses - Lemon Grove Bakery, Ryan Brothers, Giordano's Neighborhood Cuinca, Fox and Flora, to name a few exciting additions to the business family.

The City Council adopted new Craft Brewery regulations allowing craft breweries to open with less city regulations. In fact, Lemon Grove will have its first craft brewery open in this fall.

As part of our social media campaign we feature lemon grove businesses weekly and have included a business spot light in our newly launched city newsletter – The Zest.

Finances and the Future

As some of you may have heard over the past several years, months and weeks, the City is facing a difficult financial situation. We have tightened our belts. We have made tough cuts for the health of our financial house, however more needs to be done.

Our sources of revenue have steadily increased over the years, but rising costs in public safety services, animal control services, employee pensions, and general expense of running the city has increased. Our revenues have not kept pace with the cost of doing business.

What this means, is the City is in a structural deficit, leaving us financially vulnerable. Unless we make some serious changes, the deficit will continue to grow. The use of our emergency reserves is not sound financial policy. This did not happen overnight and will not be solved overnight.

In October, we will hold a workshop to look at all of our expenses and what are the consequence of further cuts involve. Only together can we build the future we want for Lemon Grove. We need to all come together to work for a common goal to maintain and improve the Quality of Life in Lemon Grove.

Moving forward, we must develop new and viable sources of revenue to help Stabilize the City's current level of service; Sustain Lemon Grove's future; and Strengthen our City finances.

We cannot accomplish this alone. Our success requires all of us to work together. We must set our sights on the same vision of success for Lemon Grove. We can work together to make it happen.

We are faced with the difficult dilemma of operating as a government that is continually tasked with doing more with less. While this is a Lemon Grove's staff specialty, difficult financial times are on our City's horizon and we must plan now for the future. The future is in our hands and can plan a better a tomorrow, together.

We have a lot to be proud of in Lemon Grove. I am hopeful that together we can accomplish good things for OUR City. I am hopeful that together we can solve this difficult issue. I am hopeful that brighter days are ahead for Lemon Grove.

We have the will and energy to make great things happen in Lemon Grove, with more volunteers and community engagement from residents, faith leaders, community leaders, and young leaders we can make Lemon Grove healthy and strong.

Let's continue to take pride in our community. While these efforts may seem small, the sum can improve our wonderful City.

Let's work together to make Lemon Grove's next 40 years incredible

Thank you for joining me this evening.